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are: drinking parties; participation in festivals, particularly the potlatch; music; dancing, and gambling. The less important informal recreational patterns, which we will discuss first, include: idling, conversation, humor, and visiting.

Informal. Idling is a feature not only of the summer period in Lower Post, when families may be seen gathered in the shade of the mission buildings or the traders' stores, but is also the pattern of the long winter evenings after the family has finished supper. Rarely are individuals seen loafing alone, the tendency always being for a man to seek company when he has free time available. People from more than a single family, when loafing in a group, tend to separate according to age and sex; the women and children gathering by themselves, the men lolling a short distance away. In such groups people often sit with their backs to each other with no thought of discourtesy. Generally the space separating individuals is not great; children cluster near the mother and the women, as well as men, sit in close proximity. In the evening idling in the center of town is often enlivened by the rough-housing and wrestling of boys and unmarried young men and girls. In winter it is sometimes accompanied by making figures out of a folded handkerchief or pulling string figures.

A special form of idling occurs when the community gathers on the river bank in Lower Post to watch the arrival of the boat from Dease Lake with freight and passengers from Telegraph Creek and Wrangell, Alaska. The boat is often heard when it is still out of sight, around the tongue of land dividing the Liard and Dease Rivers. News of its approach circulates quickly and soon the bank is lined with people watching the slow approach of the vessel as it ascends the river (Plate 11, c). The crowd is quiet but eager, these occasions marking one of the high spots of the summer stay in the post. However, the introduction of the Alaska Highway has probably deprived the event of much of its old time emotional appeal. Now families often idle in front of the restaurant facing the Highway, where the arrival and departure of trucks may be silently studied. It was in this setting that the ethnographer was reintroduced to his Indian friends upon his return to Lower Post in June 1945.

In the family as well as in other groups there is a relatively low value on conversation. While in American society interpersonal situations are mainly sustained by conversation, and any sign of its lagging is often a signal for the group to disperse, in the Indian community verbalized social interaction is of only incidental significance. A group is organized on the basis of the presence of its members. Thus Kaska social life is not characterized by loquacity. Even during visiting, conversation is intermittent, commonplace, and slight. Gossip, as already pointed out, is never expressed in large groups but is confined to conversations that include no more than two or three well acquainted individuals.

Kaska humor is neither richly developed nor subtle in its construction. The society boasts no *raconteurs* noted for their ability to tell a series of funny stories nor is there a large stock of jokes. Nevertheless, the people are always ready to laugh and a person like Old Man, who does not confine "talking fun" to drinking situations, enjoys considerable popularity.

Several functions of humor may be noted. A joke is often used to make light of a difficult situation, either one facing the humorist or a person present in his audience. Several examples may be given. When Nitla's wife sought to leave her husband in preference for the latter's brother, Nitla continued to live with the couple. The situation provoked Old Man

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to tease the boy saying that the latter was "keeping it like old times" by sharing his wife with a brother. This brought out laughter. Another example was manifested when Peter Tom and Richard Day returned from several hours of fishing with only a two inch sucker. Richard said: "We caught a whale," and held up the insignificant prize. One evening Taku Indian visitors from Teslin Lake arrived in the post. Old Man promoted laughter when he said: "You come a long way. When you're up to fifty you won't do that." The reference was to himself and his own weakening capacities.

Humor may also function as a social sanction or as a means of expressing displeasure. For this purpose a joke is sometimes employed by an old man desiring to censure youth. Old Kean one day exclaimed: "In old days used to be sing. Young boys sing—like bull moose. This time young boys just run around like hell; run around all night!" The same sanctioning quality in humor may be noted in the designation of the pilfering whiskey-jack (or Canada jay) as "Hudson Bay bird." On another occasion the provincial policeman had come upon a number of intoxicated men. After the official had retired Old Man promised that soon he would prepare a big brew. Before people drank it, however, he would post a big sign at the entrance to the western Indian Reserve warning the police to keep out under penalty of provoking trouble.

A final function of humor is its use to blunt the sting of an emotional situation in which the individual feels discomfited or embarrassed. In such situations the discomfort may be so great as to interfere with the quick juxtaposition of two incompatible ideas—the principle on which Kaska jokes rest. The missionary one day asked Old Man why he didn't go to church. Old Man replied: "If I go to church I don't get any younger!"

It will be noted that all of these functional types of humor contain what may be called an element of incongruity, only the content of the joke being selected for the function. The juxtaposition of two incongruous ideas, or the appreciation of an incongrous situation, are the sources of most Kaska humor. Incongruity provokes laughter in the appearance of a boy with close cropped hair, and in the designation of a small child as "grandmother." Incongruity is the spring for the age jokes which are so easy and popular. An example of the latter comes from Nick Lang talking to an elderly man. Nick pointed to himself as an old man while his companion was described as a youth. Incongruity determined Old Kean's laughter, when the ethnographer read him the low prices for staples advertised in an Edmonton newspaper. It is also the root of the popular Athapaskan joke in which a man teases a boastful hunter saying that the latter could only kill a porcupine, one of the easiest animals to capture. One day Eva Ardo told Old Man that he spoke too slowly. The latter promptly replied: "I'm no machine!" and aroused a storm of laughter. Seeing a young man carrying a newly purchased packboard Old Man stopped and said: "What you packing? You're not a horse. What for you got saddle?" This was regarded as quite funny. Another incongruous picture is presented by adolescent girls parading with young men's broad brimmed Stetsons. The mechanism also determines the laughter which Indians are quick to direct against the mispronounciation of their language by a white man. Non-sexual exhibitionism, which provokes laughter, may also be interpreted in the light of incongruity. Old men are fond of approaching a group and shouting convenient nonsense in a loud voice. This always provokes a laugh. Similar behavior appears in the incident of Nitla

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picking up a slim volume containing a gospel. He solemnly crossed himself and spoke the Sign of the Cross in Kaska. His friends laughed riotously.

Customarily visits are never exchanged across sexual lines, but rather between members of the same sex. The only exception to this rule is the fact that an elderly man will sometimes visit a camp in which a mature woman lives alone. Men and women exchange visits throughout the day, but in Lower Post there was noted a tendency for a few women (including Mildred Lang and Marie Nolan) to limit their visits to after supper.

Like most sociability, pleasure in visiting comes from social proximity rather than from conversation. Although individual loquacity varies, in general people tend to say little during a visit (to the discomfort of white hosts!), the situation often resembling a roomful of disparate individuals. This constraint is lacking when members of a family visit together but grows more pronounced when comparative strangers from outside the tribal district pay a call.

Hospitality is not expected as the necessary response of a host toward a visitor. In fall or winter, when visitors have come to the winter settlement from a long distance, tea is generally asked for or poured by the guest from the host's everready supply. If a traveler has brought no grub, he may be invited to eat (he is always free to help himself should there be meat in the host's camp), or he may, without shame, ask for food. A family coming to visit for sometime does not depend on such hospitality but brings its own grub, meat, and blankets. Before this food supply has been exhausted the guests will probably be gone.

Visitors enter a house or tent without signaling although Indians usually rap before entering a white man's cabin or speak upon approaching his tent. Formalities do not always mark the end of a visit. While some men have adopted the white pattern of calling a farewell, most people ignore this nicety and silently take their departure. A certain etiquette marks a visit which is directed toward making a request or borrowing something. Upon entering the house, the visitor stands quietly for a few minutes, perhaps paying attention to the host's children. Then the business matter of the visit is stated and when it is settled, departure is in order. If the call is made in order to return a borrowed object, like a plate, the guest always remains for several minutes after the transaction has been completed.

Formal. Beer or wine is generally made, or liquor purchased, with the intention of sharing it with close friends at a drinking party. A man is always host at such parties, which may be held in a tent or cabin or, for safety from the police, in the brush a short distance away from Lower Post. Guests are usually limited to members of the host's tribe, who have been selected by factors of reciprocity and congeniality. Occasionally a white man joins an Indian beer drink. Solitary drinking is unknown, if beer, wine, or liquor is available in quantities of a quart or more.

Everyone drinks from the same cup. The host dips the cup into the liquid (which is never strained) and hands a helping to each guest. In the case of bottled liquor, the bottle is passed around the company starting with the host. Sometimes an after-shave preparation or hair tonic is mixed with beef-iron stomach tonic and a few ounces served to each visitor in a cup. With few exceptions an Indian drinker, man or woman, drains his cup without once removing it from his mouth. The style of slow drinking (that is, sipping interspersed with conversation) is referred to as "white man's drinking" and, although encouraged by a

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of a child (first born?) with a meal to which friends were invited. The first game killed by a youth also became the occasion for a "party." A wealthy man honored his daughter in the same way when she attained menarche or married. Marriage feasts often constituted potlatches, at which the bride's mother aided by her brothers and sisters presented gifts of manufactured objects to the members of the opposite matrilineal moiety. While no elaborate death feast took place a memorial potlatch followed about a year after the death.[30] In winter people enjoyed the Biggest Cache Feast, presented by a man who owned a particularly rich meat cache. Huge quantities of cooked ground hog and gopher and birch-bark dishes filled with grease were served to the guests. Perhaps serving as a hint for someone to provide lavish entertainment, members of the Crow moiety occasionally arranged a mock feast. When the invited guests assembled they found very little food available, "just a bite for everybody." Amused, the guests exclaimed, "A Wolverine Party!" One moiety or the other would then usually announce a more satisfying repast.

The origin of the potlatch is explained in the following tale.

A girl was pregnant. When she was ready to have her baby she went into seclusion behind the dwelling. Here one day as the sun was setting her father heard her talking and laughing. The people did not know that she had given birth to a monster. The girl returned to her parents but the monster grew large and ate many people. He was almost a hundred feet long and had a great, wide mouth. Everybody wanted to kill the thing but nobody was able to do so. One day the people sent the girl away. That is when they killed the monster. When the mother returned she cried like hell because this had been her child. The girl cried so much that the old man became frightened. So the old man made a big potlatch and gave away many things. Pretty soon the girl felt better. Since then the Indians had a potlatch everytime somebody died.

To prepare a potlatch a host first had to secure sufficient quantity of manufactured goods and food that could be distributed. While some of the objects came from members of the donor's matrilineal moiety and need not be repaid, the responsibility for some of the contributions rested with the potlatcher and his family. The distribution of many fine things and large amounts of food won prestige for a man. From such behavior he won the reputation of being a "big man." But only a very capable hunter could acquire enough meat and skins to provide an elaborate give-away. Previous to the party the assembled wealth lay displayed in the dwelling on a mat of rawhide or a bear skin. The potlatcher then proceeded to invite his guests, all members of the opposite moiety. A small ceremony was attached to the invitation. The host, visiting a guest's home, planted his walking stick inside the entry and uttered the syllable, "nix!"[31] The visitors assembled in the potlatch house where brothers and sisters of the potlatcher served them food. After they had finished eating the host distributed gifts through his assistants. There occurred much joking at this stage of the proceedings. For example, a server, following the typical Athapaskan pattern of humor, would pretend to throw a visitor's present

[30] See below, p. 139, for details of a "small" death feast.

[31] Messenger sticks have been described for the Nunivak Eskimo. Here they were used by the message carrier who invited people to a social climbing feast. (Lantis, *Social Culture of the Nunivak Eskimo* [1946], 188.) The distribution of similar insignia among the Eskimo of Alaska is discussed in the same writer's *Alaskan Eskimo Ceremonialism* [1947], 69–72.) The trait is not mentioned in Drucker's check list of the Pacific Coast. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950).

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into the fire. The recipient would cry out, "I win that!" A host gave presents with an eye to what he had already received, the more elaborate objects being presented to people who had given him good gifts in the past. A person who had given poorly received a relatively less valuable present.

When the gifts had all been allocated, a rawhide curtain was erected in the dwelling, supported from two poles held by members of the host's moiety. Members of the potlatcher's group retired behind the curtain and decorated themselves with masks, feathers, and animal skins for dancing.[10] Members of the opposite moiety painted the faces of like-sexed dancers. Costumes did not include ceremonial wigs or aprons. When they were ready the dancers called for the curtain to be removed and began dancing to the rhythm of drums and potlatch songs. After one moiety had performed the guests allowed their faces to be painted and in turn also danced. Crow dancers sometimes ran their hands upward along the faces of the Wolf people, brushing the latter's hair away from the face. Celebrations lasted as long as four days, large meals being served every evening. In the night people gambled far into the morning. Competitive grease-drinking contests were also featured at potlatches, winners receiving their rewards in arrows and other useful prizes. Besides marking puberty, marriage, and anniversaries of death, potlatches constituted a ritual means of reducing hostility between moieties. Thus if a member of the Crow side had killed a Wolf he might avoid the open resentment of the other moiety by assembling wealth and inviting members of the offended side to attend his potlatch. The exchange of ceremonial civilities between the two parties erased all memory of the offense.

Dease River Kaska. Averaging about 15 or 16 inches in diameter, the tambourine drum of semi-tanned moose hide furnished the chief musical instrument of the Kistagotena. Only shamans decorated these objects with symbols representing the sky, moon, and stars. Along with the drum people provided rhythm with bells, made from hollowed caribou horn, or moose hooves threaded on a piece of line from which they could be swung. For amusement youths made willow whistles in the spring. Apart from potlatch chants and songs for gambling, love, and mourning, people sang to secure good weather and favorable hunting and fishing. Hunters knew specific, and presumably lucky, moose, ground hog, caribou, and beaver songs. All chants were generally wordless and in essence consisted of a few syllables repeated over and over in a minor key. The refrain of a potlatch song follows:

ha-ʔe ha-ʔe i-ʔe
he-ʔe hi-i- ho-ho-ʔo
ha we hi- e-ʔe

Songs might be revealed in dreams or learned from one's father. People did not sing war songs.

Dancing provided a popular source of amusement. Sometimes the son of a headman led dancers in a circle while pounding a drum. During the potlatch people performed and clowned while covered with bark masks, the features of which were outlined with char-

[10] At the Tlingit potlatch animal masks and skins were worn to represent the crest animals. Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 435.